

Bard Versus Boxer

Ferdinand de Cruza was, in his own opinion, the greatest man of the day in right of being the most illustrious living poet. Neither part of this modest definition was entirely endorsed by the world at large, though to some degree it ran current in a certain literary circle. The ribald and the scoffer, however, asserted that it was a fundamental article of association in the latter limited company that every member was to be regarded as the most eminent in his own particular branch, and to be eulogized as the most distinguished among mortals to the casual Philistine. Supposing it to be the case, this incognito arrangement would somewhat discount the value of the praise thus administered.

Ferdinand de Cruza was a Decadent Poet. Like Arag, he walked delicately, but the same manner was not observable in his compositions. He had a name that he delighted in. His enemies described his soulful yearnings as "decompositions." In appearance he was large and heavy in build. He wore his hair tangling over his collar in the true poetic style. Also, his eyes were big and black, like plums, and to the influence of what he wished to be taken for extreme emotion he would roll them with startling effect.

That he was an Englishman no one had ever presumed to doubt, in spite of the eminently un-English character of his name. It had been suggested that some remote Portuguese extraction might be the origin of the latter. Another view, however, of a more simple nature was that he had found it lying by the wayside of life, and, being dissatisfied with his own, had selected a transfer to some people kind to him in Judaea, but the exceedingly "celestial" shape of his nose seemed a permanent upstanding argument against the idea.

Ferdinand was once described as a young man with a talent for conversation. Oh, how he would talk! And the subject which was nearest to him in his mouth were himself, his works, his eminence. He had a curious knack of spreading himself out like a peacock's tail as he spoke, until he seemed to dominate the entire room. He had a theory that the world will only take one at half one's own valuation, and that therefore it is as well to pitch the estimate high. Certainly he never erred on this point, and there were those who said that the process of self-puffery produced some curious internal expansion as well. Poets of this calibre have usually a considerable feminine following. Nor was Ferdinand any exception to this rule. Lank dames languished metaphorically at his feet, and lent eager ears to his utterances with rapturous squintings. Large ladies of exalted rank but less exalted taste, with much laughter to his "brilliant dialogue," wherein the unexpected wrestled with the improper. "Mr. de Cruza is so amusing," they said, by which they meant that he told offensive anecdotes well.

The homage of the fair sex was sweet to Ferdinand. Specially delicious, moreover, was the adoration of a woman like Lady Laelia Harrogate, the daughter of the Earl of Harrogate, and the widow of old George Holoferna Disdebar, who made a huge fortune, don't you know, out of coal tar, and was for some years the chancellor of the exchequer. Lady Laelia was old old George's second wife, whom he had married some time after the coal tar episode, and within a few years of his death. There were no fewer than forty years between the pair, and it was said at the time that Lady Laelia had been led like a lamb to the altar solely by the indomitable will of her careful parent. As it turned out, old George died four years after the wedding and Lady Laelia was left a widow of twenty-four with a very handsome fortune to begin life over again with the view of getting some enjoyment out of it.

As the wife of the chancellor of the exchequer she had been bored to death by serious people at an age when she was utterly incapable of appreciating them. When she was free, she flew to the opposite extreme. Ferdinand de Cruza may be regarded as one of the symbols of this revolt. He gave her new and pleasurable sensations which she only half understood, but which were delightful to her. He had sufficient acuteness not to descend too low in her presence. She openly declared that she was devoted to "dear Mr. de Cruza." The world scoffed and nicknamed the great man "the widow's Cruza."

Now Ferdinand, in spite of his poetic temperament and habit of railing at the sordid practice of money-grabbing, was a capital man of business. It occurred to him that Lady Laelia, with her large fortune, would be an excellent investment. At the same time, her beauty was not only grateful to

his senses, but would constitute her a trophy of no inconsiderable value to his self-esteem. Also it would be far preferable to be master in a house where he could style his own than to continue the social free-lance with the duty of earning his dinner.

These circumstances may account for the fact that little Lord Hounslow, who was calling on Lady Laelia, was by no means pleased when the door opened and Mr. de Cruza was announced.

Little Lord Hounslow was honestly in love with Lady Laelia. He would have married her if she had not had a penny in the world. He had stated his sentiments to her with as much fervor of expression as he could command. She had replied coldly that she did not intend to marry again, and that if she did she would not marry a little man. She added, perfectly gratuitously, that she thought that a woman ought not to marry a man whom she could not look up to and respect.

At this she drew herself up to her full height and towered a head and shoulders above him. Also she declared that she liked him very much as a friend, and offered to be a sister to him. At which he had uttered a bad word, but had immediately apologized with the utmost abatement. Eventually, like another person, he went away in a rage. When he had cooled down a little he decided that he would never give up.

Therefore when he heard of the De Cruza intimacy he felt an unholy wish to maul and mangle that eminent man. He could not really believe that Lady Laelia could actually have any tender feelings toward a fellow whose hair hung half way down his back, and whose appearance and talk were enough to make one ill for a month, he said, but he did not like the idea that "such an animal's" name should be coupled with that of his adored one. Still less did he like the anxiety which racked his breast whenever he thought of this friendship and its possibilities.

Therefore De Cruza's name was to him like a red rag to a bull. The voice of wisdom said, "Go." The fiend of jealousy cried, "Stay." Naturally he obeyed the latter.

"This is a most fortunate coincidence," said Lady Laelia, after she had responded to De Cruza's large and effusive greeting. "I can now introduce two of my greatest friends to each other."

The two men exchanged sour glances. De Cruza was a man of many hatreds. Most of all did he hate the "ordinary man." And in that lowest deep a lower deep was reserved for those who were good-looking. Moreover, to do him justice, Ferdinand was entirely free from any disposition to body lording, and he was in his rage at the mean advantage which he considered that their titles gave them.

On the other hand, Lord Hounslow was furious at being bracketed in Lady Laelia's friendship with his betwixt, while at the same time deriving a curious kind of comfort from the thought that if the "beast" were only equal to himself there could not be much truth in the rumors which pointed De Cruza out as Lady Laelia's special knight.

The interview did not proceed felicitously. De Cruza blundered on to a subject on which Hounslow, as a military man, entertained strong opinions. To do him justice, the poet did not know Hounslow's profession, but the knowledge would have caused him to change his topic—especially as Lady Laelia assented with him.

"Moral suasion and the dignity of being in the right are all rot," said Hounslow, hotly.

"I should call a policeman," replied De Cruza with dignity.

"I have no doubt of it," replied Hounslow, contemptuously. "It would perhaps be too inquisitive to inquire what you would do if the policeman did not turn up?"

"And what would you do?" inquired Lady Laelia, haughtily; "supposing the man were bigger than you?"

Lord Hounslow flushed hotly, for he suspected a covert taunt.

"Well, seeing that I am the champion lightweight of the brigade, I expect that if the other man was game there would be a decent little set-to for a few minutes."

"How horrible!" ejaculated Lady Laelia.

"Barbarous!" echoed De Cruza.

Hounslow stood up straight, every inch of his trim little figure bristling erect with indignation. For the first time in his life he said good-bye to Lady Laelia with a feeling of strain. He regarded De Cruza's observation no more than the snarling of a draw-in-room lap-dog, which relies on the protection of its mistress's skirts, but that she should take part with it against him!

Lady Laelia was decidedly imprudent with regard to Mr. de Cruza. It

was distinctly foolish, for instance, to be seen so often bicycling with him. The world would probably have said something strong if it knew that she made that arrangement to ride down to Richmond Park on bicycles with him. If there was one thing more silly than making the engagement, it was keeping it. Lady Laelia did both.

It was a delightful day, warm and bright, yet not too hot. The roads were smooth and hard, and though the water-carts had been active, the effects of their passage had worn off sufficiently to prevent danger from side-slips.

De Cruza was gorgeously arrayed. He wore a bright blue coat, orange waist-coat, trousers to match the coat, a white broad-brimmed (Jameson) hat, patent leather shoes and a tie of a new and wonderful shade of red.

Instead of the usual transfer on the lower main tube of the machine his own signature appeared in gold.

Richmond Park was at its best. It was deserted save by the deer. The heavy woodlands shut out the horizon, the houses the busy life which teemed all around at such a short distance. It was possible to imagine oneself in the heart of a delicious desert of oak and fern and chestnut, traversed by excellent roads, tempered only occasionally by low hills.

Lady Laelia most wisely called a halt by a clump of flowering trees. The pair dismounted, and abandoning their bicycles, sat down on the comfortable bank to rest.

"The spirit of the scene, of his art, of the divine passion, entered the breast of the poet. Hand in hand came the thought that the poet's business speculation. Here in the wilderness that was so near town, under the open sky (just ten minutes' run from a first-rate hotel), he would declare himself to Lady Laelia. The proposal should be a veritable poem in prose. It should thrill her to the very soul, and reveal to her as in lightning flash, what manner of man he was.

"Dear lady," he began, with impetuous tenderness.

Lady Laelia turned toward him, and by that movement Pate wished that her eyes should catch a sidelong glimpse of the two big wheels which leaned in close company against a tree.

"Oh, Mr. de Cruza," she cried, in great excitement, "what is that man doing to my bike?"

Much disgusted at this prosaic intonation, the poet turned his hand impatiently in the direction indicated. A distinctly raffish and unkempt individual was undoubtedly standing in suspicious proximity to the machine. Lady Laelia sprang to her feet with the impetuosity of a mother who sees her child in danger. Mr. de Cruza rose with far more deliberation, and a feeling of uneasiness became manifest in his breast. Good Heavens! was there going to be an altercation with a common, low, uncultured person who would probably use the most unrefined language? How odious! How unpoetic! How exceedingly disrespectful to the artistic sense! It was the common person appeared to carry an ugly, thick stick, which he held precisely as Irishmen do their whatevers they called—oh, shillilags in pictures.

Lady Laelia rushed into the fray without thought of art or poetry, or even of the stick.

"How dare you touch my bicycle!" she cried. "What are you doing to it?"

"No 'arm, lady," replied the tramp volubly. "Not a 'apoth of 'arm, s'ob me. Only 'adjusting 'em, that's all."

"Then you will be good enough to proceed on your way," retorted Lady Laelia. "Mr. de Cruza, tell this man to go away."

There was a pause. Then De Cruza observed in a high voice that had a curious lack of the commanding note.

"Yes, do as the lady tells you. You are not wanted here."

There was another pause. The tramp looked from the woman to the man. He moved a step forward, and so stood between them and their machine. Lady Laelia commanded him indignantly to get on with his business, but he drew back a step in silence.

"I'm thinking," said the tramp, and his tone had less of the fawning whine, "that a plous and charitable lady like you 'ud be willin' to 'elp a pore 'onest 'ard-workin' cove with a trifle."

"I have nothing to give you," cried Lady Laelia; "and honest men don't meddle with bicycles behind their owners' backs."

"I'm obliged to yer, lady," said the tramp, with an evil grin. "I will, since yer are so pressin', tyke the purse yer offer, and likewise them pretty sparklers yer 'ave on yer wrists."

"How dare you!" cried Lady Laelia. "Mr. de Cruza, drive this ruffian away!"

Was there ever such a horrible, unpoetic, barbarous request addressed before to an eminent bard?

"Yes, do go away. We have nothing for you," quavered De Cruza. "If you don't go away, I shall inform the police about you!"

"Stow gammon," cried the uncultured intruder rudely, "or I'll smash your tallow-colored mug for yer. And now, 'and over the dibs."

With a quick, forward movement he caught Lady Laelia by the arm.

"Help, Mr. de Cruza, help!" she cried, struggling bravely with the assailant; and then, as De Cruza gave no sign, she added: "Help, you coward! Do you mean to see me murdered?"

With his heart sinking into his boots, De Cruza made a doubtful forward movement with his hands extended in a fashion entirely unscientific. But when the ruffian, flinging Lady Laelia to the ground by a brutal effort of strength, turned upon her male companion with a stick unlifted and the glare of a savage, the poet's heart seemed to fly out of his body far away, and that illustrious man fairly turned tail and fled in the same direction.

If he had preferred to refrain from this exhibition he would have heard Lady Laelia's cry of "Thank Heaven!" as a newly arrived bicyclist descended suddenly on the scene and dashed in to the rescue.

It was little Hounslow.

The tramp came up to the scratch nothing loth, for his club and the small size of the new arrival made him over-confident. Hounslow, however, was as active as a cat and in excellent condition. He dodged a blow that would have felled an ox, darted in, countered bravely with his right and put in one straight from the shoulder with his left. Over the other went, completely knocked out of time. Whereupon Hounslow naturally took possession of the club and pitched it far.

When Lord Hounslow related his proposal to Lady Laelia, which he did as soon as possible without the smallest delicacy, she owned that she had been somewhat altered in her views, not only the subject of moral suasion, and the dignity of being in the right, but also with regard to the question of height as a gauge of respect. She said that she realized that what a woman wanted was a man who was

NEW YEAR'S RECEPTION.
Y. W. C. A. Will Entertain in Its Quarters on North Washington Avenue.

Arrangements have been perfected for the annual New Year's reception of the Young Women's Christ in association. The affair will be conducted between the hours of 4 and 7 p. m. in the association rooms on North Washington avenue, and the board of managers will assist the secretary in receiving.

From 4 to 6 o'clock an exhibition will be given by the gymnasium classes. During the evening hours from 6 to 10 o'clock, the following four musicians will each provide entertainment for one hour: Prof. John T. Watkins, Mrs. B. T. Jayne, Miss Louise Hardenberg and Miss Florence Richmond.

The regular New Year's reception at the Young Men's Christian association will be abandoned this year on account of the limited size of the present quarters. A watch-night service will be conducted on New Year's eve by the Workers' band and Secretary Mahy expects to have ready by New Year's day the illustrated prospectus of the proposed new building, copies of which are being distributed in connection with the solicitation program yet to be raised for its construction.

The working plans and specifications for the new building are now being rapidly prepared by Architect Davis, and it is thought that they will be finished by Jan. 1, in order that bids may be advertised for at that time.

UNCALLED FOR LETTERS.
They Await Owners at the Scranton Post Office.

List of remaining uncalled for letters at the Scranton post office, Lackawanna county, Pa., Dec. 20, 1899. Persons calling for these will please say advertiser and give date of list. Ezra H. Ripple, postmaster.

Mrs. L. E. Atwell, J. J. Allen, Frank L. Brink, Miss L. C. Brennan, M. S. Bright, Shuman Cranford, Miss Mable Costello, Allen Carr, Oris Clifford, Charles Conant, A. P. Campbell, Stephen Clary, Miss Eleanor Costello, Ella Cox, J. Coleman, 2, Citizens National Bank, L. Cain, Cedar Court Mine, Charles Davis, Miss Helen Dolphin, William Davis, Thomas Donahoe, Dudley Bros., Charles Everett, Eldridge, Graham & Co., 2, Ella Fahay, Frank Fuhrman, Glor Gebauer, Mrs. Gengheler, Hubbell Electric Lamp Co., Gwyllyn Harris, Miss Lizzie Hallock, William H. Hansen, J. J. Hill, Ben J. Harbart, Frank Hincley, N. C. Hughes, William A. Horn, May J. Hosie, R. R. Hughes, L. Jordan, Seattle John, Miss Annie Jones, Mrs. F. J. Jessup, Mrs. W. P. Jones, Mrs. J. H. Kerst, 2, D. S. Kennedy, Herman Kaufman, Fern Kozubal, John Long, Miss Annie Langan, P. Leydon, Miss Annie McDonald, T. J. McLean, Charles M. McDonald, John E. McHugh, Miss Annie McCread, John McGally, M. J. Moffitt, Mr. Moore, Miss Bridget Mahon, A. J. Masby, Dr. Ella Meyer, Mrs. A. Reynolds, Miss Ella Metzger, Mrs. Walter Blunthorne, Thomas Mitchell, J. M. Moly, Mrs. Katie Nealon, E. A. Newhart, Hannah O'Harran, Harry Owen, James Perkins, Elder Louis J. Pettit, G. Page, W. E. Preston, Charles W. Powell, Savina Pain, Mrs. David Powell, S. Postery, Arthur Royce, Mrs. Emma Robel, Miss Julia W. Rine, Miss M. Swartz, Will Swartzell, J. S. Sanford, J. C. Schenitz, J. N. Shaffer, George Sudman, Mr. Simmon, M. J. Stryker, A. H. Smith, Miss Bertha Schenover, Miss Carrie Storme, Joseph Troop, George Tiley, Dr. H. C. Templeton, H. E. Teeters, W. R. Teeter, Miss Lena Vinewood, William C. Van Sickle.

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Viaduct Proposition Will Probably Come Up in Both.

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Those behind the viaduct measure in common council will undoubtedly endeavor to have it pass first and second readings this evening, in order that it may come up for third and final reading at next Thursday evening's regular meeting.

Select council will also be given an opportunity tonight to discuss the viaduct proposition, as the resolution from the common branch providing for the appointment of a conference committee to wait upon the Lackawanna and Scranton Railway company officials with a view to finding out what each corporation will contribute towards the proposed viaduct, will come up in that branch for consideration.

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